

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Tel: 5517 700 Fax: 5511299

Website: www.africa-union.org

DIVISION DE LA COMMUNICATION ET DE L'INFORMATION

PRESS RELEASE No. 99/2009

African Union Enhances Links with INTERPOL to Combat Transnational Crime

Addis Ababa, 29 April 2009— Identifying methods to better fight international crimes such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, trafficking in small arms and light weapons, maritime piracy, terrorism and corruption were key issues during a two-day meeting Monday 27 – Tuesday 28 April 2009, between the African Union Commission and senior INTERPOL officials.

The memorandum of understanding originally signed by both organizations in 2001 was also reviewed in order to strengthen the cooperation between both organisations to fight transnational crime.,

The AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, Adv. Bience Gawanas, emphasized that the cooperation with Interpol would provide strong support for the implementation of the African Union's Strategic Plan with regard to Peace and Security, Social Development and Governance for the period 2009-2012. "By addressing the challenges of drugs and crime, the economic, political and social space will be galvanized for sustainable development. In order for that to realize, the Interpol commitment at this stage to the upcoming processes, was of utmost importance:, she said.

The Commissioner pointed out the four major challenges related to cross-border smuggling that threaten security and public health on the Continent: small arms, illicit drugs, counterfeit medicines and human trafficking. She reiterated the intensified political support which had been rendered to the fight against drugs and crime from the African Union Heads of State and Government over the past two years.

Heading the INTERPOL delegation, Executive Director of Police Services, Jean-Michel Louboutin said that the African Union represents a key partner for the organization's current and future efforts.

"INTERPOL has undergone many changes since we first began our co-operation with the African Union eight years ago, but one thing remains constant, and that is the need for continued partnership to address the regional law enforcement and security needs," said Mr Louboutin.

"While there is the will and the commitment from law enforcement throughout Africa to be fully engaged in combating regional and international crime, we need to ensure that the resources, training and support are available to police officers on the ground so that they can do their job more effectively."

The need for African countries to extend their connections to I-24/7 beyond National Central Bureaus and particularly to border control points, giving officers direct access to INTERPOL's global policing tools, was also highlighted as vital in enhancing security.

Key among these tools is INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database, a vital element in national and international security in preventing criminals from illegally entering a country using fake travel documents in an attempt to avoid detection.

“Making sure that police across Africa have access to INTERPOL’s tools is only part of the solution, it is essential that they are supported by sufficient equipment such as national databases for law enforcement authorities to operate at their fullest capabilities,” Mr Louboutin told the meeting.

“This is why in 2008 INTERPOL, supported by Germany, launched its Operational Assistance Services and Infrastructure Support (OASIS) programme in Africa to strengthen the ability of police forces to combat transnational crime and terrorism through supporting national capacity building, infrastructure and operations and we look forward to continued co-operation with the African Union in implementing this important project throughout the region”.